DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 747 FL 024 686

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TITLE Language Awareness in Teacher Training: A New Zealand Example.
PUB DATE 1994-12-00
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Conference of the Institute of Language in Education (Hong Kong, December 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Education Majors; Educational Policy; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; *FLES; Foreign Countries; Higher education; *Language Attitudes; Maori; Metalinguistics; *Public Policy; Second Language Instruction; *Second Languages; Surveys; Teacher Education; Uncommonly Taught Languages
IDENTIFIERS *New Zealand; University of Waikato (New Zealand)

ABSTRACT

A survey of 781 elementary school teacher trainees at the University of Waikato (New Zealand) was undertaken to examine students' language background and indicators of language knowledge and language awareness, including: fluency in a language other than English; students' perceptions of their own second language fluency; exposure to foreign and community languages in high school; and initiation or continuation of language study as part of teacher training. Results indicate most students were monolingual but wished to extend their linguistic knowledge. However, few were studying a foreign language, in part due to scheduling difficulties. All had brief compulsory study in Maori, which some had pursued. Empathy and interest motivates students to use Maori in class. Contains 11 references. (MSE)

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LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN TEACHER TRAINING : A NEW ZEALAND EXAMPLE

Paul Ballingall

ED 410 747

In recent years the New Zealand Government has been making drastic changes to all aspects of national management. State education has not been exempt from this promotion of market forces, individual responsibility and a reduction in state interference. In keeping with the new political philosophy a new curriculum framework has been devised resulting in new subject curricula being written (Ministry of Education, 1993). The desire for increase of economic development and trade has been influential in the development of many of these.

In the language area, Jeffrey Waite was commissioned to collate and form a New Zealand Languages Policy, which was published in two companion volumes subtitled Part A: The Overview and Part B: The Issues (Waite,1992). In them he noted concerns, issues, trends, and possible future directions. It was strongly indicated that New Zealand was low in its level of bilingualism, that there were advantages to be gained from developing bilingualism and a strong argument presented for including the learning of another language in the common curriculum. At that stage the draft National Curriculum did not propose that the learning of another language be part of the core curriculum. He added further weight by showing that Germany, France, England and Wales, and most Australian States had foreign language study in their core, or were advocating it. By comparison New Zealand language learning in secondary school showed relatively low retention rates. 77% of individual students learning Japanese in Form 3 would have 'dropped out' before reaching Form 7. In fact the overall proportion of students learning international languages in school had been decreasing over the past twenty years. At university the same trend was evident, notwithstanding a steady increase in Japanese and Spanish.

Waite concludes:

> *If a language other than the main language of the school were to be phased in as an essential learning area for all students from F1 to F5, the demand for teachers of international languages (as well as teachers of Maori and community languages) would grow considerably. Colleges of education, universities and polytechnics would be called upon to develop programmes to respond to this demand. (p75)*

The following year the New Zealand Ministry of Education published a draft of English in the New Zealand Curriculum, as a basis for the official English curriculum for school (Ministry of

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Education,1993). This outlined the essential principles and skills, the aims and characteristics of learning and teaching in English, and described the curriculum structure. This was to consist of 3 strands - oral, written and visual language. Each strand included specific functions and processes and all were acknowledged to be integrated and interdependent in classroom programmes. Achievement objectives were set for these strands in a series of 8 levels. Objectives included:

- *awareness of how language works*
- *the ability to think critically about language*
- *control over the processes and strategies which are essential for proficiency in using and understanding language*

(p.17)

A major statement was made about language knowledge and of the importance for students to explore language to increase their awareness. Knowledge about language was said to be of intrinsic interest and worthy of attention in its own right. (p.20)

Students were to be encouraged to investigate how language is used in different settings, to make explicit their understandings about language, to explore grammar, discourse, phonology and to use linguistic terms. Examples were then given for achievement objectives, teaching and assessment over the 8 levels.

> *eg. Level 8 Written Language strand has as its objective for exploring language: students should be able to explore choices made by writers, identify and analyse the conventions of writing and language features in a wide range of genres, and evaluate their effects, showing the relationship between language, topic purpose, context and audience.*

This certainly didn't look like the return of prescriptive grammar teaching, yet the response was loud and varied, ranging from *'this could be a world leader'* to *'appalled'*, *'Engineers spell doom for correct language use'*, *'visual language is nonsense'*, *'diluting attention to literature'*, *'a sensible approach to grammar'*, *'teachers to learn basic grammar'*, *'verbose collage of high sounding truisms'*, *'English curriculum badly flawed'*.

The term 'language awareness' had come to the attention of language teachers in New Zealand following the new language elements in the Kingman Report (DES, 1988.) and subsequent reports (DES, 1989.). The debates, discussions and descriptions that occurred around this period have been well documented (Hawkins, 1984; James and Garrett, 1991; Fairclough, 1992.). Clear question and answers were raised by Corson (1990.) which greatly aid the forming of a pedagogical

policy and a curriculum content . Similar approaches had been operating with various language teachers in New Zealand over the last 20 years in the guise of e.g. 'language in use', 'language in communication', and 'developing and appreciation of English' (Department of Education, 1972). Mittins (1991) gave a depiction of development, and made comments that reflected a similar position as to that operating in New Zealand.

> *English is a dominant, increasing dominant, world language - and many English speakers are monolingual, a a situation somewhat unusual in the world at large, where it is common for humans to use more than one language. - The Anglocentric bias... supports arguments for a measure of bilingualism.* (p.15.)

With the strong sense of direction given by Waite for foreign language learning and for language awareness programmes, and the flurry of public concern over English as language knowledge as described in the Draft English in the New Zealand Curriculum, a survey was done of the language history of the complete 1994 intake of 240 students to a three year primary teacher training diploma/degree course in the University of Waikato School of Education. The objective was to find out the following as indicators of of language knowledge and language awareness:

1. Students with a L^1 fluency in a language other than English.
2. The students' perception of their own fluency in a second language.
3. The foreign and community languages that had been taken by students during secondary school.
4. The students initiating or continuing foreign language (FL) study in the university as part of their teacher preparation.
5. The language background of those taking a foreign language (FL) and any common factors.

RESULTS

Objective 1.1:

Students with L^1 fluency in a language other than English

Maori	-	4	
Dutch	-	2	
German	-	2	This was taken from a formal declaration of
Tongan	-	1	first language status on their application documents.
Samoan	-	1	
Hindi	-	1	
Gaelic	-	1	**total : 12**

Objective 1.2:

Students' perception of their own fluency in a language other than English

Maori	-	9
Dutch	-	3
German	-	2
Tongan	-	1
Samoan	-	1
Hindi	-	2
Gaelic	-	1
Japanese	-	1

This was a self judgement made on their application form to a fluency rating scale, 'A', 'B', 'C'. Only those listed as 'A' have been noted.

total : 20

Objective 1.3:

The foreign and community languages that had been taken at secondary school

	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
Maori	14	4	30	29	10
French	4	2	20	11	4
Japanese	1	0	8	8	2
German	3	1	4	1	0

Students with at least 2 years continuous secondary study of another language (F3 - F7):

Maori	29
French	12
Japanese	6
German	2

Students with at least two years continuous study of another language at a senior secondary school level (F5 - F7):

Maori	23
French	11
Japanese	6
German	1

Objective 1.4:

Students enrolled in foreign language study at the university

None

Because of this figure it was decided to find out how many students accepted for primary teacher training over **all intakes** were enrolled in foreign language study as part of their diploma/degree.

Division A (primary teacher training)

	no.	**total intake.**	**Foreign languages**	
First Year (A1)	0	240	Japanese	5
Second Year (A2)	2	232	German	5

Third Year (A3)	4	165	French	2
Fourth Year (A4)	7	144 *	Chinese	1
	13	781		13

* this intake consists of those students who wish to remain and complete a B. Ed. degree. The remainder will have gone teaching.

Objective 1.5:

The language background of those taking a foreign language and any common factors.

Because no one in the survey of first year trainees was taking a foreign language, the 13 students from all primary intakes were interviewed.

1.5.1 Factors in home background

Students born in L^2 country	2
Students lived in L^2 country as a child	5
Grand/Parent/s native speaker of L^2	8
Grand/Parent/s use L^2 in the home	9
Grand/Parent/s occasionally use L^2 in the home	4
Parents worked for a lengthy period in the country concerned	2
Other languages heard in the home	4
Parents had positive attitude to languages	8
Parents interested and encouraged language study	11

1.5.2 Factors in school background

Student studied FL at school	5
Student visited FL country	4
A key figure of influence	2
Motivated to study	7
Effective FL teaching	1

Negative factors in school background

FL of choice not offered	2
made bureaucratically difficult to take	1
uninspiring teaching	4
correspondence style	2

1.5.3 Reasons for not taking FL of choice at the university

A1	timetable difficulty	4
	ignorance	4
	told not useful	2

	FL dept not helpful	1
	wasn't interested	1
	preferred Maori	3
A2	took Maori	4
	timetable difficulty	3
	ignorance	1
A3	timetable	3
	took Maori	1
A4	(renewed interest, know what was possible and timetable was possible).	4

DISCUSSION

With the low number of students accepted into primary teacher education having any significant second language background (8%) or study (17%) it would seem imperative if one were to follow the new curriculum framework that not only should no hindrance be put in the way of second language study, but strategies to encourage and support should be developed.

At present the School of Education has a strong bicultural bilingual philosophy to support Maori education. This is necessary to preserve the indigenous language of New Zealand, an official language of New Zealand, and to encourage it to thrive. There are 81 students having their complete training undertaken in Maori (11%), there is compulsory Maori Studies for all trainees and there is a positive feeling among students to study Maori. They are advantaged in their developing language knowledge but there is a need to raise the language awareness of the majority of monolingual speakers of English in the School of Education.

With only 13 students studying a foreign language the primary schools will lose the chance to establish a positive climate towards FL learning within the classrooms. As it is now, the television news will not allow a foreign speaker to use their native tongue at interview, but will put a voice-over in English. For an insular island nation this further restrains a concept that speaking several languages is normal in the world. Any students studying a FL are not allowed to hear it being used, at a time when we should be encouraging all opportunities to hear and use another language.

Upon enrolment at the School of Education, many students are lost by the strangeness and complexity of a new career, new courses, most of which are compulsory, and without the chance to talk with experienced students who understand their confusion. A fixed timetable is necessary for such a first year programme but a concern to encourage FL study could make it possible. The university is moving towards a semester system which will also help in timetabling. At present foreign languages are often timetabled for several hours attendance a week. This makes full attendance impossible with the compulsory courses of the A1 programme cutting across such

options. Also, some courses at the School of Education operate in local schools which makes returning on time difficult, and the teaching practicum in years A2 and A3 cuts out a semester FL course.This especially applies for years A2 and A3 when the students have more choice in subjecy selection.

When considering students' language knowledge a second major concern is the decrease in the study of English within the university. The English Department has no English language courses in that all English Department courses offered in 1994 were literature based. It could be argued that these courses study the language through literature, but specific studies into the English language are not offered. The Linguistics Department offers excellent courses in language study which though general and descriptive, do study structure, processes and language use. In the teacher preparation there is no compulsory study of the English language. Any compulsory study involving English would come through curriculum courses which, because of time, concentrate on literacy acquisition and development, and aspects of language awareness suitable for children at the primary school level. This makes the encouragement of FL study of further importance for growth in language knowledge. Both points: the lack of FL study and the lack of compulsory English language study in primary teacher preparation, go against the thrust of recent concerns over standards, the English curriculum and FL learning. A University of Canterbury professor lead a major newspaper article with the heading, '*Something rotten in the state of English*' . He concluded his article:

> *As an isolated island nation we have resolutely avoided learning the languages of others. Can we not try to ensure that our children are at least literate in English?*
>
> (New Zealand Herald, 8 December 1994)

With a concern for the language knowledge of primary teachers in training, an experimental module on language awareness was devised. During an A2 Education Psychology course a chance was given for students to opt for one of a variety of options exploring the nature of learning and learners. Thirty monolingual speakers of English chose to work a 5 hour module (1 hour a week, for 5 weeks) on (some of the mysteries of) 'Language and Linguistics'.

The following topics were explored in a belief that the the content would cause a growth of Awareness:

1. Introduction to the foreign languages Chinese and Spanish. Twenty minutes each week were spent on basic greetings in first Chinese and then Spanish. It was an oral escapade with no English being used. Finally the writing of characters was explained in English and the

Roman form of both languages written only when it was felt that there had been quality listening and speaking.

2. Introduction to some basic linguistic terms. This was asked for by several of the students who were seeing them used in the literature and feeling unclear about their respective meanings, boundaries and use e.g. phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

3. Language awareness by exploring a selection of comics. A range from the 1950 - 1980 period were chosen for their language variety, cultural differences, reader expectations, and depiction of social attitudes. Students were required to discuss, and to prepare statements about the use of language in each example.

4. Activities that supported L^2 acquisition and aspects of the background of new settlers in New Zealand primary schools e.g. sequence picture stories, language experience work, graded 'spot the mistake' linked to subject study and language level, use of pictures, listening activities and varieties of dictation.

5. Aspects of English structure eg. the phonological variants of third person singular, the order of letter frequency in written English, and exploring chestnuts e.g. *'to boldly go'* and *'what did you put the knife I cut the carrots up with away for?'* These generally involved gathering data, forming generalizations, testing them and having arguments.

6. There was a written assignment which was aimed at study of the recent English and language curriculum documents in New Zealand.

EVALUATION

The following are the main areas of comments that emerged:

1. Why did you select this module?

Interest and ignorance

- *I'm monolingual and realise I have a lot to learn.*
- *I have huge gaps about language.*
- *I wanted more understanding of the dynamics and use of language.*
- *I wanted to see what it's like to learn a foreign language.*
- *Linguistics is an unknown area.*
- *Interest in TESOL*

2. What did you achieve?

A spur *and information*

- *Feel motivated to pursue TESOL*
- *Want to learn more about foreign languages*
- *Have arranged to work with TESOL children in a local school*

- *Cultural knowledge*
- *More aware of functions of language*
- *Useful TESOL methods that I can use with all children*
- *Desire to learn more greetings in our community languages*

3. What disappointed you?

Time

- *no time to follow up things*
- *issues raised needed developing*
- *always wanted more*
- *keen to do more*
- *linguistics aroused interest for further study*
- *liked to learn more Chinese*

4. If you were to do a follow-on course what would you want?

TESOL and L.A.

- *more on L2 teaching*
- *L.A. study like the comics and pictures*
- *more study of language*
- *in-depth specialization in a language*
- *must learn another language for international reasons.*

CONCLUSION

The University of Waikato, School of Education primary programme doesn't encourage its students to study a FL, and doesn't have undergraduate courses available for the general study of the English language either in the School of Education or in other Schools within the University. The majority of students investigated were monolingual yet having a desire to extend their knowledge in the most fundamental of all studies; language and languages. All students (781) had brief compulsory studies in Maori, and approximately 22% undertook Maori language courses. With the bilingual programme students (Rumaki) subtracted, approximately 11% studied Maori. Of the others, several would be of Maori descent and culture so the number of non-Maori students studying the language would be further reduced.

There is empathy and motivation which arouses a keen interest in using the Maori language in their work in schools. This should not diminish or be hindered yet there is also a growing concern that the major official language, English, has become neglected and that to partake fully in world activities the learning of foreign languages needs to be encouraged. If it is not encouraged during pre-service training, primary children will continue to receive the hidden curriculum that implies that it is usual not to speak another language.

Australia's Murdoch University has begun designing a teacher training package to make primary school language teaching more effective (Campus Review, 24 March 1994). They intend to

teach Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Italian in an effort to enable teachers to pass on their attitude and proficiency to students.

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